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With education and technology, Brexit Britain can engineer its way to greater prosperity

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James Dyson at his Malmbesbury HQ CREDIT: HEATHCLIFF O'MALLEY

The world is gripped by a technology race and those countries or companies that fail to recognise this will very quickly fall behind. My constant refrain to all politicians is: “Put your faith in engineers and in revolutionary technology – invest in them and give them a supportive environment that encourages risk-taking and new ideas.”

Britain is now in a uniquely advantageous position to become a world leader in technology, exploiting the new-found trading freedom that comes from leaving the European Union. We can operate in a business-friendly regulatory environment, negotiate directly with other markets (in particular, Asia) and sell our high-technology goods, boosting the balance of payments in the process.

Singapore is not a bad model to look to. They are focused on developing and exporting high-technology products harnessing their highly skilled workforce.

But Britain’s success in this regard is contingent on [quickly deepening the skills in our economy](#). Education is where it all begins: it is young people who will create the

technologies that we export in future. [Yet Britain will be one million engineers short by 2022](#). It is time for a new approach and recognition that engineers are among the best wealth-generators an economy could hope for.



Singapore leads the way in high-tech exports CREDIT: EDGAR SU/REUTERS

It was refreshing, after continued pleas to successive government ministers, that Jo Johnson, minister of state for universities, science, research and innovation, challenged me to open a new kind of university on Dyson's Malmesbury campus. [He is pushing through the Higher Education and Research Bill](#) to encourage the creation of a new generation of universities. We intend to be the first to take advantage of it, and I hope others will follow.

Johnson has spotted that it is companies which are experimenting, investing and developing to create the future, and has concluded that they are well placed to educate and equip the next generation. Dyson files more patents per year than any UK university technology transfer office. This inventiveness could be put to good use, inspiring and educating future prolific patent filers.

The legislation will allow us to attain university status and achieve degree-awarding powers of our own. [Until then, we will partner with Warwick University](#). Regardless of the legislative outcome, the Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology will welcome its first undergraduate students in September. They will work on "live" projects from the off, and will be mentored by practising scientists and engineers – world experts in their field – who will teach alongside academics from Warwick University, an institution renowned for engineering.

Rather than hypothesising about what it is like to be an engineer from the lecture hall, they will find themselves in the risk-filled world of inventing new, real-world technology.

Dyson to build technology campus on RAF base

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I hope existing universities will support this initiative. It is not a threat; this venture will thrive if it is collaborative. I think we collectively have the chance to offer something rather different: the rigour of a Russell Group engineering degree, combined with the skills that come from putting that knowledge to practical use. The country needs both the traditional and the new, and it is for students to decide which is more appealing to them.

I am excited for the Dyson Institute, and it would seem parents and students are, too. Parents are impressed by the high-level academic content, and they are surprised by the campus at Dyson. Students are enthused by the focus on real projects.

This is a rigorous engineering degree and a proper job combined. It will be the highest level, part-work, part-study programme in the UK – two and a half times the learning experience of a normal university. It will be hard graft, but we will cover the tuition fees and the students will be paid a salary. They will become fully fledged, battle-hardened, mentally exercised engineers, **free of debt**, in a job with exciting prospects.

This legislation has the potential to change university education for the better. I do hope that it passes through Parliament next week, before the House rises.

Sir James Dyson is an inventor, designer and founder of the Dyson company <https://www.dysoninstitute.com/>

